Interviewee: Dr. Raymond Tompkins

Interviewer: Dr. Tiffany Caesar, Dr. Grace Yoo, Sydney Jackson, Yoko Tamada

Date: February 1, 2023

Location: San Francisco State University

Collection: 1968-1969 San Francisco State Strike Oral History Collection

Length: 1 hour 26 minutes 7 seconds

Transcriber: Ernest Olivar

Bio: Dr. Raymond Tompkins is a historian and scientist, born in San Diego from a navy family and moved to San Francisco during his teens. He participated in the San Francisco State College Student Strikes and afterwards served as the third chair of the Black Student Union and VP of the Associated Student Body where he helped establish the school's first daycare center. Afterwards, he served as adjunct associate dean of the college and worked towards creating the curriculum for Black Studies. He has since worked with students and scientists on pollution and environmental racism in San Francisco and the Bay Area.

Abstract: 00:00:00 – 00:11:37 Dr. Raymond Tompkins discusses the beginnings of Black Studies at SF State, the ideological differences of the College of Struggle, and the people behind its inception. 00:11:37 – 00:21:03 Tompkins talks about working with his peers in building the Black Student Union (BSU) at SF State, making a difference by establishing the first child care center in the CSUs, and the short-lived single-subject teaching credential in Black Studies. 00:21:03 – 00:30:35 He expresses his disappointment in the college not establishing the extension division and losing the teaching credential, but highlights working as a collective with other communities to create the child care center. 00:30:35 – 00:40:25 Tompkins emphasizes taking the skills you learn and bringing it back to your community. He talks about disease susceptibility of the Black community in San Francisco and how he and his peers were able to get more Black students and students of color in medical school and other professions. 00:40:25 – 00:52:28 Tompkins recalls his experiences in exposing young students to his work in the mass spectrometry lab and showing that you do not need a PhD to make a difference in the community. 00:52:28 – 01:00:49 He describes how the university tried to divide African and African American students to avoid unity. Ultimately, collective care and action helped unite and pay for food and rent of struggling students. 01:00:49 – 01:11:10 Tompkins criticizes ethnic studies for not seeing their outreach and efforts in Bayview Hunters Point and Fillmore. 01:11:10 – 01:20:00 He discusses the importance of speaking up to address issues, seeing SF State as a jumping point to becoming leaders in the community, and trying to get money to fund ethnic studies. 01:20:00 – 01:26:07 Tompkins ends by talking about his experiences working abroad, learning about economics and business, and encouraging students to do the same so that they can run and implement their own programs.

Transcript

00:00:00 Tiffany Caesar: Thank you so much, Dr. Tompkins for coming again to share your story. We would like for you to start off with your presidency, your experience as being the chairman of the BSU. Can you tell us about that?

Raymond Tompkins: Okay, there was a little build up to that prior to. We'll go that summer, prior to me becoming chair.

Tiffany Caesar: What year was that?

Raymond Tompkins: 1970 I believe. I believe so. That previous semester at San Francisco State, there was a lot of chaos with the department and Hayakawa and his efforts and the State's efforts of, as I recall it, de-intellectualization of Black Studies. Dumbing it down. Searching for mediocrity within, because the initial faculty out of the eleven positions, nine were PhDs. They got rid of faculty and fired them, because they didn't want young bright faculty members who would then stand up behind principles to speak up on the issues. And one worried about, oh geez, can I make that mortgage payment? Some have families, and all those other economic ties as well as political lack of intervention or involvement in the community. What Hayakawa did is that he turned around and hired Lucille and Woodrow Jones, who knew nothing about Black Studies or the whole concept, but hired them and put them in charge. And the faculty then had Randy Simms and would not recognize Lucille and Woodrow. So there was chaos, and I must state, we had some very strong women on this campus and in the Black Student Union. And that, the sister who was working there, she was known as Carlotta Simon. And she lived in my old neighborhood over there in Ingleside. And Carlotta was a work study student who was doing all the payroll and keeping things moving when the college then would change the structure and change the guidelines. She would go through and do this later on in life. Carlotta became an outstanding principal in the Oakland School District. She was then became a muslim who was known as Dar Mullo. So I don't want to be disrespectful, but as kids we knew her as Carlotta, if you live on campus and all. And so with this confusion, seeing that the new college would not allow the Black Studies in terms of community involvement, there were many things that they systematically, and I'll talk about that in terms of the BSU and what they did to us systematically destroying and taking down and the next group of students, organization, I'll talk about what they did to the Pan-African Student Union as well. We then moved off campus to have the type of program that we felt would then benefit the black community. It was called the College of Struggle. There was a struggle. You had two different political ideologies. There you had the cultural nationalist and the revolutionary nationalist. Those who were with the Black Panther Party had a philosophy similar to the Black Panther Party and those in the Kurenga crowd. So these two conflicts and I'm sitting on the board, who else was there, there was Benny Stuart, Leroy Goodman, we're all part of the old BSU. And then you had Randy Simms, Margaret Pulley, Norman Brown's wife.

00:04:55 Norman was part of the core group and did a lot of good in the city. The end of that crowd, I'mma just put it out. Bill Bradley, alias T'Shaka, his paychecks came in as Bill Bradley, okay, held a secret, held the meeting that we all the board wasn't invited to, and turned around and inspired or gave inspiration for Randy and Margaret to turn around and fire people. Fired Leroy off the board said you're no longer on the board and made this a public announcement and wanted to redistribute the workload. I

said, Excuse me but you can't do that and announce it until the board meets. They want to call it the Family, the Board, whatever you want to call it. We have to meet to have this debate. You just can't arbitrarily do this nonsense. So that did occur. We had put a stop to that, among other activities, caused the demise. I had a philosophical difference in that one we should be doing both because the bulk of our people are here on campus as well as then let's develop this outreach, this development out here in the community. They almost became a cult where they didn't want to deal with other people and the rest. The disputes got too heavy, too fraught, got personal. I'll leave it at that, I won't go through what went down. I'll have to say let other people save face, but I don't play them games, you don't threaten me. There will be consequences, so we did broke up. We had gotten the building from the Redevelopment Agency for $1. So there was an opportunity to deal with it. But through, Dishonesty is the best way to put it and not being upfront. That whole division fell apart and unfortunately the School of Ethnic Studies was under siege a couple times. So after that I became chairman in the fall of the Black Student's Union.

Tiffany Caesar: So you're talking particularly about the college of struggle that you all created in which you had an ideal that the two factions could come together, the culture nationalists as well as the revolutionary nationalists. However, that's not what happened.

Raymond Tompkins: It didn't. The ideological, the dishonesty. One group, the cultural nationalists having a secret meeting and plotting and telling the group here, this is how you should do it. And the rest over at Bill Bradley's place on the weekend. And Norman Brown's wife spilled the beans in the meeting, and that some of the guys are trying to hit on a married woman there at his meeting and she went off on them and told everything. So that's how we found out what was going on. So, that just, you know, as my mama would say you broke your dinner plate with me.

Tiffany Caesar: Was the college of struggle a continuation of the experimental college?

Raymond Tompkins: No, the experimental college was over there. This was an outgrowth of that conflict with Hayakawa and the administration with having Lucille and Woodrow as being the department chair and the fight of having Randy Sim. Randy Sim was over here, he changed his name to another African name, which I don't know when he was here with me, so I don't want to disrespect the brother. But that was how I knew him when I worked with him, the name he operated under. When he changed his name, he was back east, so I'm not back east, I know he changed but I don't know the name. This split was nothing from the experimental college. It was from the controversial and the problems that were taking place here in Black Studies is setting a direction.

00:10:05 When Jimmy Garrett set it up, the BSU had an off campus operation in the community and you had the on campus operation of the BSU. Hell, if we can't have a type of Black Studies that address the needs of Black people, then let's take it to the community and build there. And that's what it was. Some of the educational differences we had, it was almost like I'm fighting Booker T. Washington in terms of just getting basic skills and not, because of my education and my preference in terms of chemistry and sciences, we need, almost like the boys in terms of the technical skills from management and running things. But I also brought other, truck owning operation and other skills. If you just quit fighting and cut out the nonsense, the owner said, I will work with you and train people, but you have to stop this nonsense. I'm trying to deal with, trying to get them, not in peace– cut out the nonsense and let's sit down

and see what we could develop. That didn't work unfortunately and the college of struggle fell apart. And I remained on campus and that following fall, I became chairman of the Black Student Union, basically, because everybody's gone. Benny was in law school. Leroy was in law school. Either you graduated or you're in jail. So you can call my administration like reconstruction after the strike.

Tiffany Caesar: Can you tell me what year there was?

Raymond Tompkins: 1970, in the fall. 1970 yes. And it was building. What do we do? And I went through three different groups of people for the search committee of the Black Student Union. People had different reasons for wanting to join, but very few want to work. When the work comes up in organization, people fade away and scatter. People want to say, I'm the chair. I'm running this. We finally… On the third group had a core group of people that are in and they would have said that if Eugene Johnson, Ron Bentley, Rich Mar, Tommy Sellers, Ro, I'm sorry, I can't remember the last name, time is catching up with me. That was the core of the Black Student Union. I begged Eugene Johnson to come in because I can't be the vice president of the student body, it's just too much. I can't. So Eugene finally capitulated and gave in and we worked together and started building the BSU and building our accomplishments that I'm proud of. First the child care center when I was VP of student body. We set that up when I was VP of student body. We exchanged the lease agreement that the associate students had on the Gallery Lounge, which is part of what the Student Union current building is built on and part of the Educational Building is part of the built on the old Associated Students' lease. We exchange that for the property that is currently by the dorms is where it's at. And we were the first to build a child care center area on all eighteen campuses, and with a sliding affordable scale for mothers to be able to go to school. They didn't have that before. It's like Black Studies, it never existed until others.

00:15:07 Innovation, that's what I love. It's creativity and innovation. Mediocrity is our enemy, just to do enough to get by. That's why I'm rough on my students when I'm teaching and the rest I'm all, I want you to be the leadership. Take over, run it. Be in charge. Develop new ideas. You can't keep doing what we did. Hell, times have changed. Therefore, your tactics, your ideas should be addressing what are the current conditions you are facing? Some things are the same which you hate. We still see our children being murdered in the street. But we need to change also in what we're doing and how do we approach it. Innovation is the key. That's one of my greatest criticisms with the current department. Ron Bentley, dear friend of mine, he was on the search committee. Ron and I wrote the first Master of Arts degree for Black Studies in 1971. We submitted that to the Black faculty in Dasani, Raye Richardson, Alma Maxwell. Oh, mistakes. It wasn't regret but I wish I had a better decision I could've made. The Jones and Jones after this chaos with Randy and Lucille and Woodrow, then an interim solution was Martin Jones. Martin and I worked for him when I was part of Presidium, and I worked in the EOP program. Martin was blind and his son Calvin has his doctorate as well. Martin was a brilliant musician. He knew Sun Ra, Roland Kirk, all the rest. He brought some of the entertainers, he was gifted. But he didn't have the administrative skills. We needed to take it to the next level. I went to Asa Hilliard, who was my mentor when he was department chair at secondary. And I asked Asa, okay, we have the BA, we have a teaching credential. At that time in secondary education, we had a single subject teaching credential for Black Studies that you can teach social sciences as well with, so it gives you a wide variety of courses you can teach there in secondary education. You weren't limited. I had the third to last teaching credential in that. Also, I administered because I was then teaching in Franklin, first assignment. So I was a supervising teacher for

the university, for the college on the last two teaching credentials in Black Studies that were issued by the state of California. I knew both the people very well prior to this from high school and other brothers participating in the BSU. But…this hurt my heart. Ron and I submitted this as students, juniors, here at San Francisco State, just as Mariam and Jimmy did as juniors. Funny parallel that this is the same. We submitted to the Black faculty. I typed this out hand on an old hand typewriter on onion paper because I can't type worth a damn. Still, to this day. I got to get help, but I typed it on onion skin so I could erase it and type that over rather than a regular white paper. We submitted. He was supposed to make copies for the faculty. Somehow this got lost. After they saw what we've done, Raye Richardson, Alma, and I, we sat in the Ed building and went over some of the stuff. Then they moved out. Let's move to the faculty at large because also we included part time faculty that wasn't part of it.

00:20:01 Part of this also during the days is that we sat in this room. And that the BSU help run Black Studies. I would turn around and learn what faculty allocation time was from Asa. I sat on the Academic Senate as vice president of the student body. And I of course went to the Senate and we sat on the finance committee as well. How the money is flowing. Learned that from Willie Brown sitting on the Ways and Means Committee, because Willie had the smarts and I stood up and learned from others that the school budget the Senate with Vice President Smith can directly give it to Willie Brown so that San Francisco State would get the money since Willie is also a graduate of San Francisco State. So he had a great influence on us. But we see I hear from the faculty, where are you going? How do you manage the budget? How are you going to do with the conversion? As I talked about the Extension Division of the college, which was never developed here, which is an asinine. That's the whole source of income where you could have had, as we did when I was teaching over at Vista College, Department Chair of International Trade, that I wrote courses on how to do business in Africa, you know in the different nations. The business community would love this. The federal government supports these types of operations. No. That is a source of money to finance that could be coming in and helping expand the department. Never developed. They never developed the BA while we were here. I'll talk about with Philip McGee and myself and what we did then. But all of that, that's part of the failures in my opinion. Where's the growth? When I look at the current department, my criticism, the growth. When I was here and later in the 80s, I'm looking at the green sheets when you do course description. Aren't these what you wrote back in the 60s, early 60s, for currently justified classes today? That is nonsense. Where's the growth? They lost the teaching credential. When I went to T'Shaka, they asked, What about the teaching credential? He didn't even know that we had lost it and the state has taken it away, and you're the department chair? Where is the career for these students? You're not keeping up on how you're being attacked. It was the same. I just looked at him and walked away from him. Couldn't deal with that considering my friends died, were executed when they went back to Africa because of their involvement in the strike. I have raised funds with them, for Palpo to the left of the ANC. Pulye was executed. People died. People did anywhere from six months to six years to establish this Black Studies, what we fought for. Breaks my heart when I sit back and I remember. But then as you saw in the pictures, you saw smiles on my face at the times and the good times we had as well. So we created, also, when I was chairman of the BSU, Eugene Johnson and I, Eugene Johnson was down the hoop, became chair after me, that we had more Black students graduate from San Francisco State than any other time. We had set up Black students in science, Black students in media, Black students in business and setting up the old system that Jimmy and others, what we had mentors and those of them in there to help. I was doing research in chemistry. Rizelle Carter, who was taking chemistry, come here brother, forget the U2, come on here and get on the

machine and let me show you how to do it. Rizelle was in internal medicine and I drive to Richmond to have my brother take care of me.

00:25:01 Rizelle and I have been known each other since junior high school. It's just. I'm blessed. I still have friends. And it just so happened that four of my partners became physicians. They still look after me, three are still alive and they kind of look after me so I'm still here. You gotta have doctors you can trust. I've been in hospitals. I've seen the worst. Running a hospital, I've seen the worst of medicine practice, and I've seen the best of medicine practice as well. I wish racism wasn't a factor, but it is in science today. That's part of what I'm fighting today in terms of the chemistry and risk assessment, because the medical model that they use and risk assessment of chemical exposure is a 35 year old white male. Had nothing to do with you as a woman. The original breast cancer study done in America was done on white males.

Tiffany Caesar: So when you are talking about your experience of being, was it the second or the third? The third chairman of the BSU.

Raymond Tompkins: Of the BSU, right. First it was Mariam. Mariam was actually then, she didn't want it. So then finally they had elect by default, Jimmy became. So Jimmy, then Benny Stewart. Then me.

Tiffany Caesar: All right. And so you said under your leadership of the BSU, you all created a child care center, the first child care center.

Raymond Tompkins: That was through the Associated Students. I was VP of the students, let me get into that. They wouldn't let a Black man be president of student body. Charles Jackson had won the election before the previous semester, but Hayakawa intervened and threw out the elections. And that then put in a white kid. I can't remember the man's name. It was progressive. We had a decent discussion with each other, and he didn't pull no punches or lied about it. They would not let me be president of the student body. I went to the Central Committee. So, okay. What do you want? What do you think? How do we, we worked on a collective basis. I was not running around here thinking all that in a cup of potato chips. It's working on a collective basis. And the Central committee felt okay, go ahead and be vice president. I was looking for our state educator, Wilson Rouse. He was in charge of the state education, I forget the title. And he had said some rough stuff about Black Studies. He didn't understand that Mariam and James said, get a double major, one in Black Studies, learn to love yourself, cut out the self-hatred. But also, if you talking about building your community, either get it in science or business or whatever other aspect, bring the skills back to the community. We're talking about technical skill as well as self-love. I had thought, and I got the word back from Bill Thompson. Don't care. Wilson Rouse waiting for me to show up and we're going to have this discussion and try to smooth things out. And he was here in this building waiting for me in Bill's office. I thought out of courtesy and professional courtesy and all he would be in Hayakawa's office, state superintendent of schools. You would have him there. The title just came back to me. He wasn't. And so I'm with my buddy, William Savage, who's passed on, Covid killed him. I've been knowing him since junior high school, but he's still running with me. I said man, this makes no sense. Kin Mainly is gay and he's up here talking to a woman. This is illogical and he's in here with Hayakawa. We gotta go see what these people are up to. Come on, let's go have a drink with Hayakawa. So I had a drink with Hayakawa, some teacher scotch. He was drunk.

00:30:05 He was drunk, okay. Dancing and being silly everywhere. I asked him in the old administration building. He had this beautiful African statue. I asked, what does this symbolizes and what is this part? He knew nothing about it. He looked at it strictly from a European perspective. Oh it's so pretty. I said damn, all this artwork and he doesn't know a damn thing about it. But then that's when they offered me to be vice president of the student body. They had later, we found out, they had white folks running around. You can't let him be president of the student body because he said they're going to take the money, go buy guns and kill the white people. So I definitely had to make sure, let me set up the child care center. This is what our agenda is building. Not this nonsense and these bigots running around, trying to advance their careers on the backs of Black people. We see this today even with our own Black politicians here in the city. I see it on the Air District's board. Oh yeah, let's get on the Human Rights committee and health environment. And all they do is move on to the state and they cleaned up nothing in the Black community. That's another discussion of what I'm doing now. But it's part of what our philosophy was in setting up Black Studies. You take the skills back to your community and teach others, and that's what I'm doing now, working with a medical student. Brilliant sister. She already has a PhD in organic chemistry, and she's working on her MD. And she's looking at genetic variances increase susceptibility as I am in terms of that, and working to raise the standard to a whole another level so that we could stop this premature death of Black people, because you'll find this throughout the nation in Covid and in Louisiana, it's a lot. They talked about the Mardi Gras then, caused everybody to have this elevated… bull. 70% of the deaths in the first wave of Covid was in the Black community because the Black community sits in what they call Cancer Alley because the land is so cheap. They put us there and that, think of it if you're running a marathon and you're already running with two hundred pounds on your back. These chemicals, which we are susceptible to make known for over 40 years in the scientific literature, and that then you're exposed to the Covid. Weight is a factor. Obesity, diabetes. But then you already have this burden of chemicals and you're susceptible to it. They have calculated susceptibility. How do you transfer susceptibility into cancer risk? They don't have a form. That's what I'm arguing about now with the state. I'm preparing a document on this whole issue because I measured Dr. Palmer, dear friend of mine who is white in the chemistry department here at state. Brilliant scientist. He did the analysis on the Soviet space station before even American astronauts went on board. It is that equipment that we used to measure benzene levels at ground level where the babies play at a high risk population, because EPA has it because again white folks orientation in the science, six feet off the ground and the average height of a white male as they calculate. And nothing to do with us, a people who are most crucially affected because when I went into Bayview Pete and I… 55% of all babies in the first grade at Carver Elementary School are asthmatic. I go back ten years later. Emily Thompson went to San Francisco State as well. Small world how you run into your associates. 85% of the babies in the first grade are asthmatic. 85%, in the increase not a decrease and what the school district did, that's why I preach on math, get the math so they can't lie to you. What the school district did is they turned around and start bussing the kids around so you changed the population so you artificially lower the number for asthmatic victims. So I don't care what, if it's film, business, English, whatever. Go get the math.

00:35:15 Tiffany Caesar: So when you were the president of the BSU, what were other things you would say that your cohort contributed towards?

Raymond Tompkins: What we did?

Tiffany Caesar: Yeah.

Raymond Tompkins: We actually brought up Kwame Ture on campus to speak and he stimulated people in thinking in terms of moving, that's why it helped us then move to set up the different organizations and the different disciplines. I funded this through the AS. When I was VP of the student body, first in the BSU, we set up the master's in the faculty in Dasani and threw it in the garbage can. He later became governor in South Africa. He was from South Africa for this little fake state that they created as an interim before Mandela was released and actually became chairman. He sold his soul and went back to South Africa to do that. So that's who he was. I was hoping back then that he would bring that next educational level to bring, because later I wanted to see a PhD in Black Studies and Ethnic Studies. We'll talk about that when I was adjunct associate dean under Phil McGee. But we were pushing for these type of things for the master's and all, reinforcing the teaching credential we had and taking it to the next level. One thing Eugene Johnson and I are the proudest is that we had more Black students and students of color going into medical school than all 18 other campuses put together. And I run into some of my student graduates in my efforts here in San Francisco and in the Bay area. They graduate there in medical school. Black doctors, women and men, others had to go to Cuba. Then some others went to Ohio State. All over this nation where you can get into medical school. We produced that. We had the influence in media. Johnny Jenkins was one of the first Black cameramen at Channel Seven news. So we organized the professional groups because your job is to get out of here. This is a stepping stone. Don't get caught up in this. It's to move on. Take the skills here and move on. Go get your doctorate. Be the leader, not a follower. Be that innovative person. That's what we push. Innovation. Creativity. If you keep doing the same thing over and over again. I agree with Einstein. That's the epitome of insanity. If you think you're going to have a different outcome. It ain't going to happen.

Tiffany Caesar: Can you speak to how being the chairman of the BSU and a member of the BSU influenced your career?

Raymond Tompkins: My career, again I was blessed. I was blessed in that when I came to state, the strike influenced this university and a perspective how education should be. What should we be doing? It influenced the science department. The head of Graduate Division of Chemistry, Dr. Ramsey, saw that I had a gift in it. I used to make moonshine in high school. I have straight A on organic chemistry. Actually if you go on YouTube, look up, Mr. Wizard, who was a science program. I used to have my face every Saturday morning in the TV set. At seven years old, I was asking my dad for a chemistry set. It was one of those things, I was looking at my skin and seeing how it's divided and cracked and all this and looking at the wooden ruler, not plastic, and seeing how the cells were being shaped in the wood. Then I started doing atomic theories, oh this is composed of this, out of like the Greeks did. Same, same. I forget the term they use.

00:40:09 I went into camp, my dad got to sea, he was in the Navy, so he couldn't play with me and teach me the chemistry in third grade. But they did give me chem set so I've just mixed it up and everything. In high school, I got into it. My teacher happened to be working on his PhD at
Stanford. Took me and my buddy Tom Shelton, who went over to Berkeley, and I went to state. He became a lawyer and I'm running chemistry and environmental camp so that's a whole nother world. I mean that's like taking me from a 1928 lab to the cutting edge of science in '67. It's like wow. Then he

took us to San Jose State to see the chemical engineering department, and I was like Jack Nicholson in the movie Batman. Where does he get all these wonderful toys? It's like I'm seeing all these wonderful toys that you can play with inside. Gee, I didn't bring that CD with me. When Pete and I did the air studies in '98, we took the children, the gifted children from Carver and made them our junior scientists and our assistants. I taught the class over there for about a week with the children, so they're familiar with the equipment we were using, what are we doing. Valerie, little sister, she knocked up trigonometry in the fifth grade, and she went on and got her PhD in science. Her counselor couldn't tell me in what discipline. And another young lady went on and got her masters in science. So if you worked with them and expose and really work with them, not pretend. They would open up the canister, the tungstenite canisters and do the air, and the rest of it in their bags and play with getting the equipment to get it to work. So the samples then we'd take into the lab and then we took them into the lab, the mass spec lab in the old science building that's now torn down, building a new one. We had them in there, and then little sister said, look underneath the table. You need to change that. That's a fire hazard because they had a copper coil coming out of the mass spectrometer that was dripping water into the electrical sockets, and that we had the circuit breaker. An old man didn't bend over to go look and. We had to rewire the light, but she got on the computer because in the old days we would just have to go through charts and print out charts and until we get a match. Now the computer does that. So I said yeah, put the line up. Okay hit it. She turned around and it was illegal chemical discharge from a dry cleaning plant that was in the school's air because the school didn't have open windows and the janitor didn't even know how to turn on air conditioners to circulate air in the school, because we also picked up ammonia from the rats that were in the school. So we did do some good in them, forced them to get some engineers to come teach them. And they started the first citywide asthma task force to address the high risk of asthma in African people. I have my theories on that as well, but that's another topic of discussion. The strike influenced the chemistry department. Dr. Ramsey created the course, chemistry in human environment. He hired me to be his research assistant and to be the TA for the course. We went out in the Sunnydale projects, and we sampled 158 people, Black folks, and we had 8%, it broke out evenly, 4% with heterozygous folks, 4% homozygote having a trace enough out of the 158. We did fat titration on hamburger meat on the stores in the area. We busted two of them. One had 55% fat, and it's still there. But they can't package their meat. They have to ship it in already done. And the grocery store, it used to be next to Colonel Sanders on Geneva, now it's apartment building. They had 70% fat in it. So that little patty shrunk up a whole lot when you cook it.

00:45:04 But it showed the students and the rest that, hey, you don't need a PhD to make a difference in people's lives. You take the knowledge you learned here, and you can impact and bring about a better quality of life. That was part of what we were teaching. And I'm so proud and honored that Dr. Ramsey took this stuff and created this and this is what got me pumped. I've been all over the world now. Africa, Asia. It's still here at home base in San Francisco, in the Bay area. I've worked in every community in the Bay area, from West Oakland, Vallejo, Richmond as well. When you have these impacts of chemicals that are impacting Black lives and communities of color because we're always by this garbage and junk. So that's part of the spin off from the strike and how it's influenced my life. That's what I've been doing all along, just like my picture that I shared with you. I'm over there at UC Berkeley teaching college level chemistry, Chem 102, the middle school students. But I put a little twist on that. You have a child, mom and dad. You don't have dad, mom come on in here and you have to take a class with me on Saturday, and the test was, how many grams of sugar can you dissolve in 50 ml of water at 50°F? And we put the

experiment up and set up and they spilled shit all over the scales and everything else. I said see, that's how OJ Simpson got cut loose. Sloppy lab work. Everything in here is contaminated. So they understood what their child is doing, it's not just make believe, fill in the blank. They had to write hypotheses to conclusions. Look at some of the eighth grader assistants. You swear it was a PhD. They had timetables when this changed, everything. They got into it. And one of the young men, the young man, his mom went to San Francisco State. She was living with me in the dorms. We used to party together and everything. Small world. And those are the things and as I shared earlier, one of my students, when I was in a car accident, was my treating physician at physical therapy, and she recognized me. She said, you worked the shit out of me in class because they had homework seven days a week. And what I also did is I wrote a book for their parents. This is what you would do with your child every night. Period. And so I took it out another level and you educate the whole family, the whole family, those that want to do the whole cultural nationalist perspective. The whole family. Period. For growth. Oh, it's just a penny, the parents said that man is crazy. He got my baby till one 'o'clock in the morning working on his shit. And so I had to go bring flowers. Thank you for covering me. And at the end, parents have given me a hug and kisses because it is your bias that you think your children can't perform. You let these other people tell you what they can't do. Don't put those limitations on your child. Don't let them. Let them grow. And like little sister told me, you worked the shit out of me. But if it wasn't for you and my mother, I would not have gotten through medical school and to put me in the same sentence with your mother. I don't care when you got it. So I really got my reward right there. I had to call my old dean up, George Gagne, the assistant dean. I said, hey, I don't care if we die tomorrow. Shit we did it. We got women and women of color into science and medicine. And one of my babies, one of our kids, cured my butt without drugs. She electrocuted me and got my nerve to go back inside my vertebrae after this woman hit me with a big old truck and put a truck inside a trunk of my old Mercedes. I still drive it because it has steel and she worked it.

00:50:01 That's what you want. You always wonder what happens to your students, what goes on after they leave your class. And I had the blessing to have the benefit of that. This is what you want. This is what we were working towards is that that involvement in the community. When we did the work, we did lead analysis as well in the soil. Flame photometry here and actually I taught the course when I was teaching environmental chemistry and engineering in Berkeley. We did it on the mass, AA atomic absorption unit, and measuring the whole nine yards and having the students know how to freeze it. We thought the kids handled it better than the undergraduate students over there at Berkeley. Don't put the limitations, same here. I love that Bryan turned around and said, okay. I was doing research as a sophomore. Okay. Anytime you teach, you know, you stay away from your teachers, any of your professors. Oh, you're not a graduate student. I don't need you as my assistant. If you could think it, go do it. If you remember clearly history in Birmingham when the babies were blown up in the church. It is that you, elementary school children junior high filling up the jail. And then part of that piece was that then we need to have a say. We can ask, we're going to jail? And that was part of the movement. We are all in this together. Then I've always found when all your elders would tell you, be leery of that. Somebody's about to run a game on you. Make them make sense to you, explain to you. We wanted to develop critical thinking and analysis. We were thinking, we need desperately thinking men and women, not robots. Be critical of me. That's what I expect you to do. Just because I said it don't mean it's absolute. I'm not pope. I'm not claiming infallibility, okay? I'm a human being. I screw up.

Tiffany Caesar: Thank you so much, Dr. Tompkins. We're going to wrap it up soon. One question is, you spoke about one of the members being from South Africa. Can you kind of speak to the relationships that Africans and Africans in the diaspora were having within the BSU, the other organization, and or just San Francisco State University in that particular period?

Raymond Tompkins: I could deal with San Francisco State, what we did it, how we addressed it, and how we fought. The institution tried to divide us. Because, one, we hired African students to work in the BSU. That's another thing how the institution fought. Dr. Garrett talked about that, we had work study contracts. I had negotiated as VP of the student body because the AS had lost the work study contract and renegotiated for every $1 I got out of AS, I can get five federal dollars. You got to understand, back then, minimum wage was $1.62 an hour. Okay, so $1 can get you a lot. So we expanded in terms of different services. We created. I was going on and tell them, go right and create it. So we had not only students from the continent working in the organization, we also funded the African Students Association as well. They had their own. Mostly it was a lot of Ethiopian students at the time because summer skill and all had the affinity for Ethiopia. And so there was a large constituent. Understand the university makes a lot more money off of international students than you. They got to have a year plus all their money up front and they're charged three times the money. Plus, the campus gives a third back and the university gets two thirds of the money in their pot. So it's a money making.

00:55:01 That's part of the argument some years ago. It was about foreign students and that this is a taxpayer supported institution. That was a big argument over at Berkeley. You have an imbalance and you kicking out American students to bring. Well, it's about the money. And we had a working lady. She was part of the… It starts with an M. Miasa. Miasa was her name, and she worked with us. She was in office doing the work. And so we had an ongoing relationship because the university always wanted to split us. Split Africans students from us. You don't need to be with them. In the orientation, the federal government, when they brought them in, had them on buses and would then take the Ethiopian students and driving through Fillmore. Don't deal with them. This the federal government. They're slick. Watch out for them. Put me through negative in there. It's like, damn, I gotta watch them. And so that's why we conscientiously went and know, come on in. Have it, share with us. You ain't got money to pay your rent? Here, we'll kick out and we'll put all our checks together to make sure and nobody went hungry. Everybody's rent was covered. It is a collective, true collective operation and that nobody went hungry. Some of the African students weren't used to that in kicking it because they were preached capitalism. Me, me, me and never about we. It's about me. If you remember the old civil rights songs, we shall overcome, not me. And when we worked together, we were able to achieve a lot. It's when the system broke it. It's like when I was BSU chair. Let me slip back, I wanted to make sure I got this in. Ron Bentley, another member of the Central Committee, when I was living on Randolph Street, pointed out that the FBI put a camera across the street from my apartment looking into the apartment. And that another buddy who worked in the audiovisual library, where you check out the cameras and everything else, that they had bugged the BSU office. So we never talked in the office. You want to talk? Let's go out for a walk. Let's go get a cup of coffee. I wave to the camera all the time. Then we throw a rope and pull it down, and they come back and put another one up. So we knew that we had two cops following us, and when Slim was driving his car, his old Chevy, and following us around and the rest of it. So we were under serious surveillance and all these rumors, like I said earlier, don't make him president of student body. He'll buy guns and kill the white folks. So it is some of the silliness, the bigotry that has been

transposed in some of the institutions, we don't really understand the rules of it. But that's part of the, they had the cameras and we were under surveillance, but we still went on. We still had our means. We still tried to bring about unity. When I was VP of the students, I made sure all student organizations pay. Asian. La Raza. Native American. Everybody get your money, just write up a program, you know. I turn around, I'm walking across campus and jealousy and stupidity, they're smoking a joint over there by the business building. I heard the brothers talking shit and I just went off. Look man let me tell you something. Go write up a goddamn program and I'll get you the damn funding for it. Talking shit on the sideline don't get it. Why do you have to stand in the corner and talk shit? What are you going to do to create something and make a difference? I just finished with expanding the work study program five fold. Sort of all this money. What happened to the next group that came behind us? No officer can be paid working in a student organization. No outside telephone line. If you're an organization how can you function? They took away systematically. Palpo couldn't have a telephone, couldn't have paid people organizing the bill. Then they restrict funding going to outside organizations for work study, being involved.

01:00:10 I worked over in Chinatown for a summer, you know, had a great time. But all of this systematic, it wasn't an accident. They did not want us communicating with each other. They loved cultural nationalist politics, us hating on each other. Not giving a damn about each other. They put all the roadblocks in there structurally. With Phil McGee, he asked me to be the adjunct associate dean in 1980. I did it until April, couldn't take it no more. What I did do is do all the, and I didn't bring the sheets. I think I have a couple of old sheets of the data sheet. I taught a course, 899, independent study. I don't know what the numbers are now. T'Shaka had to sign it off and I did all the math on setting up the surveying all four departments. They sent the database for Phil to argue before the academic senate to set up the current masters in Ethnic Studies. Now the departments went on and developed further and got their own MA in it. Africana Studies didn't. They're still running under Ethnic Studies, as I understand. Am I correct?

Tiffany Caesar: Yes.

Raymond Tompkins: Didn't develop it in my time in the community. Here in Bayview-Hunters Point, Dr. Gellers did the work. African American women had the highest breast cancer rate in the world. I never saw anybody from Black Studies in our community coming to address the issue. It was me and Dr. Gene Mabrey, brother, he's a psychologist. None. And when we set up Black Studies, that's where you should have been. If you tell me, oh I love African people, then why the hell ain't you over there helping and loving and trying to help them survive and live? Why must they die at this alarming rate? The highest in the world. More than any third world nation was right here in San Francisco. And that's not what we fought for. That's not what I fought for. That's not what I learned. That's what Bryan showed me, how did you take these technical skills and bring it back and make a difference? You don't need a damn doctorate to save lives. But you learn here to make a difference, if you really study. I got mad at one student doing an internship about ten years ago. She did an internship with me, and she was copying off of the internet. We're trying to make a booklet and stuff and help deal with chemical exposures. I lost it. What are you doing? You trying to send us to jail? I'm looking for your interpretation of what you read and developed so we can put this in here to save lives. Later on, little sister to me, I'm more pissed at Ethnic Studies because she was also getting a major in chemistry, but also in Africana Studies and nobody taught her the importance of it and don't copy. Faculty, make sure they're not copying off of damn internet and putting it

in your paper. Make sure it is their thoughts, their thinking. Later after I cuss out the rest of it. She did get it, and then I also then wrote a letter of recommendation for her to Cornell, for her PhD in organic chemistry. So are you trying to make up to me now? Organic chemistry? But it's like, you smiled and you happy.

01:05:01 She wanted to work on makeup for Black women and the difference is because the model, again, is European, just like what I talked about risk assessment. The model is them and not us, and now looking at genetic variances in a population and what diseases affect us in how our skins are different and susceptible in that, no, it ain't based on racism. This is based on science, and I hope the department will look at these factors for the expansion of our lives because our lives are important. Don't throw them off, but we need the scholarship. If it's social science and economics, where are the courses in stopping the economic plight of African people here in the Bay area. The gentrification. Where's the political strategy of the political courses? Part of what I'll share with you in the science department and others colleges feel that Ethnic Studies is not carrying their load. They're looking for the scholarship. The scientists there have to have a proposal every two years, how are you bringing money into the college, how are you building the university, you're required. What has Ethnic Studies done? I have not seen one program from Ethnic Studies out there in Bayview or in Fillmore. I haven't seen it. I'm there every day. I'm on boards. I'm on the southeast clinic. I'm out here on Rafiki Wellness. I stay within my discipline, but I also look at the economics because that's part of— science is a business in America so how the hell you can't look at that, a holistic aspect, what Dr. Thornton said, you know. That's why I preach math, but you first have to understand the problem so you can select the right formula to solve the problem. We need problem solvers. That's what motivated me all my life. I want to be a problem solver. I don't want to just talk shit about it or be the professional negro and talk about it. How can we come up with a solution? That's why you bump me to deal with ideas. I'm now writing a piece to the state of California. Someone who I work with out here, I won't mention his name, that's where my letter is. Come on. And do they have any good brisket over there in Sacramento because they don't have it in San Francisco. I couldn't find them. But it's those working relationships and I can't emphasize to the students that we need your critical thinking and analysis, but that also requires you to study. We had PE classes. We'd argue the theories out. Man I used to think something was crazy as hell. But you know what, that stimulation wasn't happening elsewhere. They were thinking way in advance of what possibilities can be and then the challenge that I took on is that how do we implement it. That's what Eugene, Ron, and the rest of us on a Central Committee had in mind. It's like reconstruction after the war. That's why I don't emphasize so much on the strike, because it was a war. You look at the film and stuff, but how do we build from there? We were able to get more men and women of color into the sciences in the professional community, but then from Nixon and the rest of the reactionary in the recession. Then they started fighting, then affirmative action, because you just can't drop the first Black person. You got to get the balance and that's how you had UC Davis medical school and fighting affirmative action and that policy is still in place to this very day by whites. And I'm now sitting down with the mayor, there's not one Black doctor at the southeast clinic. We had him before, but yet the patient base is 60% Black. We desperately need you. We desperately need this generation because, as shown through the scientific literature. When I have somebody I can relate to that understand my problems. Then you have that empathy and that understanding and you get better treatment of the patient. We don't have that. And that is also contributing to our death.

01:10:26 So we're trying to get this mayhem. We had human rights, oh that's reverse discrimination. Kiss my dark side of the moon and get this in because we're dying. I ran the hospital lab and I've seen the worst of worst and I've seen the best of best. And young sister who was giving my echogram. She's from Atlanta and she said, I've seen them kill us, but here at this hospital, they work to save you so that's why I work with trauma center. But I'm blessed it's near my house. But it's like those are the things we need so desperately thinking men and women that are not caught up in the superficial bigotry that society— every time you turn on TV, what do you see? I'm a dope dealer. Black man is, turn on Fox News. I have where all six stations come up and every time, oh, they got a Black man robbing somebody. This stereotype just has contributed to the death of that young Black man. Another thing when I was VP of the student body, I sat on Attorney General Younger's commission of community police relations for three years. I made the recommendations to them. There was a group of us on hiring women, hiring people of color, standardization of training of police officers because everybody had their own little thing to do. The 410 agency, no uniformity. And then you come back and find out to get into the police culture, you find Black officer beaten, stumping the crap out of your own people way beforehand, not just this incident, but here a few years ago, when they shot this little skinny Black kid over there in Hunters Point. He had a knife and these guys got a billy club, you could slap the damn knife out of his hand. I went off on the lieutenant. We were getting some food at Hard Knocks Cafe, and man, are you an officers for justice? Yeah, I'm in. Well how the hell do you justify five Black cops shooting this kid? Couldn't one of your big ass come over there and tackle him? Could you take the baton and slap the knife out of his hand? That ain't what, and I forget the founder's name. I said I'm one of the fools that voted to have Black officers in and went before the state legislature. You are more of the problem than they are. You were to prevent this type of stupidity, to prevent the senseless murder as intervention. I hear now before I came here I was listening to it and they were talking about, if you stand by and you don't speak up, you guilty too. I'm for that. Take their home, take their pension. If your God is green, in America, sadly, that's what it is, then take it. Let there be consequences rather than going again and again and again to these funerals of young men and women. It ain't just Black men, but you see the stereotyping. We're dope dealers. We're criminals. When was the last time you seen on there a Black man as a doctor on TV? If we're going to change, then we need to go back to preschool. That's what I'm proposing in the proposal. Go to preschool. Let the babies see me in a lab jacket. Let the babies see a woman in a lab jacket because unfortunately Asians in San Francisco Bay area are predominant, then they don't— Oh, it's them. No, you part of them. You the mothers and fathers of science and mathematics. That's why I taught and wrote the course that African and Native American contributions in science and mathematics. I taught Kamet math and I taught Mayan math. Read Ivan Van Sertima's work. They came before Columbus. But I have my bias.

01:15:01 Van Sertima has such a high squeaky voice and that English accent just lectures me. But, brilliant scholar. Do you hear me? Brilliant, brilliant. But that's my bias just like I couldn't stand Huey P. Newton's voice. He had a high squeaky— I had to listen to Bobby all the time. That's just my bias, my hang up. But Bobby can get a pan card trick, give him a bottle of scotch, and Bobby's gone forever. But, you know, that's my personal knowing people and etc. behind the scenes. Because we were part of that. That whole generation, that whole culture, that period. So I am a child of my period of time in history. I have my biases in it and I try and recognize it for what it is. And then again, I'm all about, as Dr. Thornton said, moving forward. I want to be a problem solver. I need each and every one of you students to graduate and go beyond. San Francisco State, think of it as junior high, not high school, junior high to

move on into your professional career and to be that leader, whatever you choose. I'm not going to tell you what to do. Just be the best at it.

Tiffany Caesar: Thank you so much, Dr. Tompkins.

Raymond Tompkins: Oh no, Ray. Police don't call me doctor. They had a few other adjectives when they made me lie on the ground.

Tiffany Caesar: I think this is a great space to stop. So thank you so much, Ray. I appreciate it. And so much more information that we can add to our oral history archive. I'm going to give these pictures to Yoko and she's going to just take a picture of them, and we're going to give them back to you, and then I'll meet with you.

Raymond Tompkins: They old so they curl up. That was in 1980 when I stepped down as dean, when I was adjunct associate dean. I also set up an exchange program with North Africa. I don't know if you want to put that on tape. When I was here at Ethnic Studies with Phil, I also found federal money that they were doing to train teachers how to teach because damn it, at that time, most of our students that got out of black economics or black political science would get Fs when they went to mainstream courses. So that means you're not teaching this dialectically. You are not teaching the whole and how we are a subset of it. All right, I got some money. You know, everybody gets stuck on themselves and didn't want to do it. Then I got $55 million from Libya. That's in 1980. Angela Davis was going to proofread Gaddafi's Green Book. I sent a student over there. If you're working with me, we're going together and I don't cut you loose. Farouk, he had screwed up, and they sent his butt back. He still wanted to do business with us. The provost said, Ray– Wade Romberg was president. He said, Ray, we want you to get the money, therefore you expand Ethnic Studies and not be dependent on state dollars, and that's what I'm looking at, the business of education. How do we expand it in this international market? So what if we gave the money back in three years? Money market was paying 12.4%. Some of it drops down to 10%. $55 million on the interest on that, I got about $16 million. I can put in nineteen-eeny dollars into Ethnic Studies. They did not understand the business of education and how this is a business on an international scale and it's a shame that we never grew. At the 40th anniversary, I'll give credit to Wade and all those, we didn't understand the business then of education then and we don't know now. I said, okay Wade I'll give you your due props on that one. Then we walked up because Wade's in my pictures. He's not in the dashiki. But brother did bring a bottle of, you know that commercial of scotch that they advertised. He brought me a bottle of royal crown.

01:20:11 Tiffany Caesar: Was it in a purple bag?

Raymond Tompkins: Yeah in a purple bag.

Grace Yoo: Have you met Sydney?

Sydney Jackson: Hi I'm Syndey. I'm a History major and Ethnic Studies minor in my senior year.

Grace Yoo: She's doing an independent study.

Raymond Tompkins: What do you want to do beyond this?

Sydney Jackson: I want to be a professor in Africana Studies. I want to teach intro classes hopefully at community college.

Raymond Tompkins: Like I told them, go get the math. Do you want to run it? Do you want to run it, or do you want them to run you?

Sydney Jackson: I'd rather run it.

Raymond Tompkins: Oh, well, then I'd rather count the money in the dollar. That's what I was talking about in terms of faculty and how we can chair positions into converting into dollars and stuff, that's a business. I'd also take a business law course so you understand contracts and business law, because education is a business. Don't get into this mythological— Bullshit. It's a business. And if you're talking about independence or sustaining Africana Studies or however you want to call it. Then you have to find ways to finance it. You have to look at the international market. What can you contribute? When I'm in Africa or Asia, I love going overseas. I love being treated as a human being. They ask you, hey brother, can you help me? When I was in Vietnam or Laos, hey brother, can you help me? When I'm cleaning up the water or not letting them screw it up. When I was over there setting up an orange juice extraction plant and doing bottled water because they didn't have a clean glass of water in Ghana. Nigeria, I got my graduate course in corruption. I ain't going to fake it. After I left here in '80, I then was setting up an airline system for Woolaway, and Usuji was running his business and Dove charter airline. I had a wet lease. I had 727 ready with pilots and crew, and I had helicopters to fly around to the different capitals and also fly them. It was so quick. It's amazing how he said he was worth 60 million, but they moved the decimal point over and it was 6 million instead of 60. And then when I hit the airport, that's when I knew I was in trouble. Because Usuji sent two beautiful African women. Monkey in the middle, right? One on one. One on the other. I didn't come over for this. I have 1.4 billion line of credits set up with the Taiwan, with the Lao family. Because Boris, who went to San Francisco State, was my campaign manager, went into finance and Howard Lao, his grandfather was Chiang Kai-shek's running brother. So we had the Lao family banking and bank bankroll 1.4 billion and these fools are trying to run game. Hell no. Small world, my cousin was Marian Andre, whose father was in power was Minister Protocol for Nigeria, and I stayed with them for six weeks until I can get out of the country. And I gave my 40,000 that they fronted me with so she can go pay the officials and get me out the country, but it's business. Then later I went back and they talked me into working on a water purification because the river scape is so polluted from oil.

01:25:02 That's why they burning up and blowing up the pipes. Not that they're crazy. They can't drink the water and it's killing the fish. Just like the brothers over at Somalia. They're up there attacking the ships because they sit up there and take these trawlers and take all the fish out of the ocean, and there's nothing for them to live off. So that's why they're doing it. It's economics.